



**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ ( ኢሕአፓ )**  
***Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)***

November 24/2008

**REMEMBERING THE MARTYRS, CONDEMNING THE REPRESSION**

November has had the saddening habit of being a month of death and grief in Ethiopia of recent times. Back in the Derg days we remember the summary execution of 60 people, the brutal killing of 23 young EPRP members and in November 2005 the savage slaying of more than 50 peaceful demonstrators by the Meles Zenawi regime.

All of the recent three regimes in Ethiopia have been characterized by the absence of the rule of law and the use of savage repression and force to maintain their rule. The military regime and its Red Terror can never be forgotten. The present regime has had its share of massacres and genocide and is presently engaged in atrocities both in Somali and in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. Three years ago in November, its forces killed more than 50 peaceful dissenters who objected to the election fraud perpetrated by the regime. The Meles regime is holding in its dungeons and labor camps thousands of political prisoners. The independent press has been muzzled since then. The perpetrators of the violence that cost so many lives are still in power and continuing with their savage frenzy. The absence of the rule of law is the norm and the repression has not slackened.

Bekele Welde Giorgis, Mulugeta Sultan, Yitbarek Hizkias, Woubshet Reta, Zerbruk Abebe, and countless others martyrs during the Derg time are to be remembered along the hundreds of victims killed by the Meles Zenawi regime in the past few years. The EPRP continues to struggle for an end to the brutal regime and for justice to be done by bringing the criminals like Meles Zenawi to judgment. The thousands of political prisoners in Dedesam Bir Sheleko, Zwai and many other prisons must be released without delay and their tormentors punished legally. An end must be put to those who trample on the rule of law and who commit murder against the people at large.

**EPRP**  
**P.O.Box 73337**  
**Washington DC, 20056**  
**USA**  
**Tel. 202-291-4217 Fax 202-291-7645**

**E-mail : [ESPIC@aol.com](mailto:ESPIC@aol.com)**

**Website: [www.EPRP.com](http://www.EPRP.com)**

**EPRP**  
**BP 22**  
**Bois colombes 92270**  
**France**





**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ ( ኢሕአፓ )**  
***Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)***

January 19, 2009

**THE SOMALI DEBACLE OF THEMELES ZENAWI REGIME**

The invading troops of Meles Zenawi have been forced to leave Somalia after two years of wreaking havoc and committing war crimes. The corrupt commander of the troops, the officer who was shaking down Mogadishu business men, that is to say, Gabre Yohannes, did try to put a brave face and to claim that the operation was a success and the mission “accomplished” bringing to mind yet another such claim that turned to be false elsewhere.

Meles Zenawi embarked on the Somali adventure to please a foreign power and in the process to reap political and financial benefits, which he has done in exchange for the blood of so many Ethiopians and Somalis. The stated mission of ousting and crushing the Islamic militia has failed totally as the hard line Haraka Al Shabab and other factions have emerged stronger than ever before and the transitional government is as weak as ever. The campaign to “capture” three or four alleged Al Qaeda operatives produced nothing. Somalia was thrown into more chaos than ever before and achieved no peace whatsoever; it did not get a central government. As the EPRP had said from the very beginning of the invasion, it was a blunder of big and costly proportions. That, two years after the invasion, the troops had to leave without any visible gain or achievement is proof of the disaster. The Meles regime gained political support for its action and was given military equipment and money as aid or to “train” Somali soldiers and police. The transitional government, a patched up body in the first place, was not able to take off or to stabilize. All the carnage was for nothing. Thousands died many more were displaced and forced to internal external exile. The Meles regime is responsible for the disaster and must be made to account for its war crimes in Somalia.

EPRP  
P.O.Box 73337  
Washington DC, 20056  
USA  
Tel . 202-291-4217 Fax 202-291-7645

E-mail : [ESPIC@aol.com](mailto:ESPIC@aol.com)  
Website: [www.EPRP.com](http://www.EPRP.com)

EPRP  
BP 22  
Bois colombes 92270  
France

This material is circulated by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), P.O.Box 73337, Washington DC 20056, which is registered with the Department of Justice, Washington DC, under the Foreign Agent Registration Act as an agent of the EPRP. As required by the Department of Justice the registration statement is available for public inspection. which does not indicate approval of the contents of this material.





**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ ( ኢሕአፓ )**  
***Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)***

January 31, 2009

**OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**IS DICTATORSHIP BEING REWARDED?**

According to press reports the European Union has given the Meles Zenawi regime €251m (US\$329 million) in aid allegedly to boost development projects across the country. The agreement was signed on Thursday by the bloc's Director of Aid to sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions Gary Quince and the regime's Finance and Economic Development Minister Sufian Ahmed.

This is one more radical change from the EU position adopted in 2005 not to give aid to the repressive regime that swindled an election and murdered more than 200 people protesting the fraud. Since 2005, the Meles regime has not improved one but worsened as a hardened violator of the human rights of the Ethiopian people. More than 35,000 prisoners languish in the various known and secret jails, torture is routine, the free press is hounded and muzzled, repressive laws have been found to curtail, press freedom and restrict the activities of NGOs, the regime has committed war crimes in the Ogaden and in Somalia too. By all measures, the dictatorial regime of Meles Zenawi deserves condemnation and not rewards. As to the often repeated but hollow claim that the aid is given for development, it is common knowledge that Meles and his officials are wallowing in corruption, they divert financial and food aid and that they have embezzled the national treasury to the level that gold in the national bank has been substituted by gold painted lead. To give money to the repressive and corrupt regime means nothing but padding the secret bank accounts of the corrupt officials, and strengthening their repressive capacities. Unless the EU is rewarding the regime for its ill guided and disastrous adventure in Somalia there is no justification for the money that the EU is giving out to the enemy of the Ethiopian people.

The EPRP objects to the continuing EU measure of giving money to the Meles regime. The money does not help the Ethiopian people—it only strengthens the dictatorial regime.

EPRP  
P.O.Box 73337  
Washington DC, 20056  
USA  
Tel. 202-291-4217 Fax 202-291-7645

E-mail : [ESPIC@aol.com](mailto:ESPIC@aol.com)

Website: [www.EPRP.com](http://www.EPRP.com)

EPRP  
BP 22  
Bois colombes 92270  
France





**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ ( ኢሕአፓ )**  
***Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)***

February 13/2009

**EPRP CONDEMNS DEFENSE AGREEMENT**  
**BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MELES REGIME**

The defense ministers of South Africa and the Meles Zenawi regime have signed a memorandum of understanding in Addis Ababa. Defense Minister Charles Nqakula and his counterpart in Addis Ababa, Siraj Fergesa agreed that both countries would work towards developing procedures for military co-operation including the exchange and training of military personnel, instructors and observers and promoting technical co-operation. Co-operating in the field of military medical services, knowledge and training would also be on the agenda. The agreement is said to be motivated by their "commitment to support peace efforts on the continent under the auspices of the African Union".

The EPRP strongly condemns this military agreement and calls on South Africa to end or abrogate it without any delay. Military pact of any sort with the dictatorial regime in Ethiopia is counter to the basic interest of the Ethiopian people and to the search for peace in the region as a whole. It is not possible to imagine that South Africa does not know the predatory nature of the Meles regime. its carnage in Somalia, its massacres inside Ethiopia itself. The EPRP is surprised at this move on the part of South Africa while the Ethiopian people had through the years given their full support to the struggle of the South African people against Apartheid. There is little or no justification for the military pact and all claims of an AU peace mission is sham as the AU peace mission has not up to now served the interest of the African peoples.

The EPRP calls on the government of South Africa to stop any military pact or cooperation with the anti people repressive regime of Meles Zenawi. The EPRP calls on all democratic forces in South Africa to support the struggle of the Ethiopian people and to raise their voice against this military agreement.

EPRP  
P.O.Box 73337  
Washington DC, 20056  
USA  
Tel. 202-291-4217 Fax 202-291-7645

E-mail : [ESPIC@aol.com](mailto:ESPIC@aol.com)

Website: [www.EPRP.com](http://www.EPRP.com)

EPRP  
BP 22  
Bois colombes 92270  
France





**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ ( ኢሕአፓ )**  
***Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)***

February 13/2009

**EPRP DENOUNCES THE MILITARY COOPERATION**  
**BETWEEN DJIBOUTI AND THE MELES ZENAWI REGIME**

The EPRP has over the years condemned the unholy alliance between Djibouti and the Meles Zenawi regime, an alliance that has worked against Ethiopian refugees and the interest of the people in the region. Omar Gelleh's dictatorial regime is presently waging war against the Afar in its land and in Ethiopia with the full cooperation of the Meles regime.

Recently a few hundred Djibouti youngsters selected mainly from the Issa ethnic group (of president Gelleh) have come to Awash Arba military training center to be given military training by Ethiopian special commando officers themselves trained by America special forces in Blattein. Reports also indicate that Gelleh's wife, Kadra Mahamoud Said, has also sent to Awash some Issa youths (Habr Awal clan) from self declared independent Somaliland. According to Djibouti, the Ethiopian trained youths are to be stationed at the Djibouti—Eritrea border but those in the know state that they will be deployed, since they are trained for counter insurgency operations, against the Afar rebels of the FRUD movement now battling in the North against the Gelleh regime. The Meles regime has given vast tracts of land to the Djibouti president and his family and closed its eyes when armed Issas have attacked Afars of Ethiopia to grab land.

In the past, the unholy alliance has led to the deportation of dozens of Ethiopian refugees back to Ethiopia and the carte blanche given to the Meles death squads to attack Ethiopian political exiles in Djibouti. The evident attempt by Meles to fan the Eritrean Djibouti rift holds in its fold the ongoing war mongering campaign of the regime in Addis Ababa as it destabilizes the Horn of Africa region as a whole. The interest of Ethiopia was not served and will not be served by the Meles-Gelleh alliance. On the contrary. This being the case the EPRP denounces the military cooperation between Meles and Gelleh against Afars in Ethiopia and Djibouti and against the interests and democratic aspirations of the two peoples.

EPRP  
P.O.Box 73337  
Washington DC, 20056  
USA  
Tel . 202-291-4217 Fax 202-291-7645

E-mail : [ESPIC@aol.com](mailto:ESPIC@aol.com)

Website: [www.EPRP.com](http://www.EPRP.com)

EPRP  
BP 22  
Bois colombes 92270  
France





**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ (ኢሕአፓ)**  
**Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)**

March 8, 2009

## **MARCH 8 - INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

### **THE STRUGGLE OF ETHIOPIAN WOMEN FOR THEIR RIGHTS CONTINUES**

Ethiopian women observe March 8, alas, not with cries of victory but with declarations and vows to continue the struggle for their basic and fundamental rights. Regime change in Ethiopia has not augured well for women seeking emancipation and empowerment, demagoguery to the contrary by the ruling groups notwithstanding.

During the 1974 February Revolution, Ethiopian women rose up for their rights and called for real change. The totalitarian military regime that forcefully established itself massacred conscious women in its Red Terror campaign and opted for giving verbal recognition for the equality of women setting up its own satellite organization for women. The present regime has all the buzz words about the role of women in a society's drive for real change but has acted consciously against the struggle of women to achieve their rights. With this regime and its all inclusive bankrupt and cynical policies, women and the young have had to endure aggravated suffering and repression. The rights of women have been trampled upon in a serious way. Young women have been trafficked and sent to modern day slavery to the Middle East. Preteen girls have been turned into prostitutes. Harmful traditions are more or less in place barring the verbal occasional propaganda to the contrary. The spread of AIDS that the rotting and immoral system has favored has victimized more women than men. Attempts by women to have their relatively autonomous associations have

1

EPRP  
P.O.BOX 73337  
Washington DC, 20056  
USA

Email [ESPIC@aol.com](mailto:ESPIC@aol.com)  
Website [WWW.EPRP.com](http://WWW.EPRP.com)

EPRP  
BP 22  
92270 Bois Colombes  
France

Tel. 202 291 4217 Fax: 202 291 7645



been quashed. The overall repression that the existing regime relies on has meant women have become more victimized than ever before especially in the rural areas. The regime holds very many women political prisoners like Aberash Berta who has been disappeared for more than eight years now. The Meles regime's terror campaign in many places (Gambella, Ogaden, Gondar, Wollega, etc..) has victimized women and their children.

In Ethiopia, women are more than half the population but they are second class citizens in terms of rights. Basic demands for equal pay, equal opportunities, for equality are ignored. The EPRP has for the past 36 years struggled for the rights of women and will continue to do so till Ethiopian women achieve their rights primarily through their own conscious and organized struggle.

**Victory to the struggle of Ethiopian women.**





**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ ( ኢሕአፓ )**  
***Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)***

MARCH 17/2009

**SHAME ON THOSE WHO INVITE A TYRANT TO THEIR TABLE**

**(BY WAY OF AN OPEN LETTER TO BRITISH PM GORDON BROWN)**

It is sad to learn that once again the tyrant in Ethiopia, the very man who has ordered so many massacres (Arba Gugu, Water, Adebabayes Iyesus, Gambella, Ogaden, etc), has been invited to London's next meeting of the G20. Prime Minister Gordon who vociferously calls for the arrest and trial of Sudan's Omar Beshir has apparently no qualms or moral restraint to invite a criminal tyrant like Meles Zenawi to London to take part in an international conference.

Whether the G20 deliberations would ever benefit the peoples of Africa is a matter left alone as the point of our message is that inviting tyrants and those who have committed war crimes to the deliberations is a shameful act in the first place. Meles Zenawi is guilty of genocide, war crimes and gross human rights violations. In Ethiopia, more than 5 million people need food aid, millions are impoverished, and lack of foreign currency and overall economic malaise has increased the unemployment rate. Corruption is rife and Meles and his wife are the top of the list of the most corrupt in the country. Inflation is worsening and food price increase has passed the 100% limit. In short, the reign of Meles Zenawi has proved a total disaster for Ethiopians of whom more than 35,000 are suffering in dungeons, labor camps and ghost prisons. Does all this make Meles Zenawi a proper guest for discussion on serious matters that ostensibly claim to have the interest of African peoples at heart?

The British government under former Prime Minister Tony Blair aided and abetted the repressive regime of Meles Zenawi. British trained and armed security personnel took part in the daylight murder of human rights activist and teacher Assefa Maru in Addis Ababa. The notorious security chief Kinfe Gebre Medhin was trained by Britain. When Meles Zenawi lost the 2005 elections and massacred more than 200 people and jailed more than a hundred opposition leaders to crown his fraud neither Britain nor the EU imposed a serious ban on his regime. The latest invitation sent to Meles by Britain to attend the G20 meeting in London next month is nothing but a continuation of this unholy tolerance of a tyrant. We object to this very strongly and call on Ethiopians in the Diaspora to express their objection in all possible ways.

EPRP  
P.O.Box 73337  
Washington DC, 20056  
USA  
Tel . 202-291-4217 Fax 202-291-7645

E-mail : [ESPIC@aol.com](mailto:ESPIC@aol.com)

Website: [www.EPRP.com](http://www.EPRP.com)

EPRP  
BP 22  
Bois colombes 92270  
France

This material is circulated by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), P.O.Box 73337, Washington DC 20056, which is registered with the Department of Justice, Washington DC, under the Foreign Agent Registration Act as an agent of the EPRP. As required by the Department of Justice the registration statement is available for public inspection, which does not indicate approval of the contents of this material.



**EPRP**

**P. O.Box 73337**

**Washington DC 20056**

**Tel. 202-291-4217**

**Fax 202-291-7645**

**EPRP**

**BP 22**

**92270 Bois Colombes**

**France**

**e-mail ESPIC@aol.com**

**Website. www.EPRP.com**

**ETHIOPIA**  
CRM/CES/REGISTRATION UNIT

# **THE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE**

## **(PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS)**

**BY**

**THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE'S  
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**

**(EPRP)**

**January 2009**

This material is circulated by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), P.O.Box 73337, Washington DC 20056, which is registered with the Department of Justice, Washington DC, under the Foreign Agent Registration Act as an agent of the EPRP. As required by the Department of Justice the registration statement is available for public inspection, which does not indicate approval of the contents of this material.



neutrality and peaceful coexistence, etc.: the EPRP has presented thus its programmatic alternative. Other organizations have also their own visions and choices. This requires that the proposals find a common meeting ground at least to have a common transitional conception and to let the people decide what shall be their preference. It is imperative that all forces uphold the fact the people are sovereign and that their freely expressed decision and choice shall determine the future of Ethiopia. The EPRP is ready to accept and respect the decision of the people.

## THE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN ETHIOPIA

### PREFACE

On December 1989, a year and half before the downfall of the Mengistu Haile Mariam military dictatorship, the EPRP issued a 23 pages paper on the question of the Democratic Alternative in Ethiopia. At present, such a document is again called for a variety of reasons. First of all: to present the EPRP's vision of a democratic path, of an alternative for Ethiopia. Secondly, quite a few foreign circles seem to be under the conviction that the Ethiopian opposition, including the EPRP, have no vision of the future other than criticising the ruling front. Actually, most opposition organizations have clearly stated political programs and proposals of the future. In this brief paper, the EPRP will present its conception of democracy, the main political basis on which it radically differed and differs from the ruling Tigrean Front (TPLF) or EPRDF as it likes to call itself.

The struggle of the Ethiopian people led to the February Revolution of 1974 and to the downfall of the feudal



What is the way out?

There is no full proof panacea. Yet, there is always a way out as long as the people struggling for their inalienable rights will, in the end, realize their objectives. But time is not generous at all. The very survival of Ethiopia is at stake. Long experience shows without ambiguity that the future of Ethiopia should be without the TPLF. Any option that takes the ruling front as part of the solution is doomed from the start. This is a result of properly assessing the past 17 years of experience. 17 years of a brutal dictatorship, bloody, ruthless, no tolerance for even the milder dissent. The mask is no longer covering the mess that the Meles dictatorship is wallowing in.

The way out or the democratic alternative for Ethiopia has necessarily to base itself on an end of the rule by the Meles regime. The Stalinist and authoritarian regime has to go. There is no other way. It is beyond repair as it is now; it has rejected all overtures for reconciliation and reform. Those who still dream of reforming this Stalinist group are day dreaming and inadvertently causing harm to the interest of the people of Ethiopia. The EPRP has presented

will not be easy either. Economic backwardness, the tradition of authoritarian rule, the evil legacy of the military rule and the one party system are all serious obstacles. But we contend these are hurdles the Ethiopian people can overcome. They do not want to replace one dictatorship with another and... they have no better choice than to make a democratic Ethiopia a reality".

After 17 years of dictatorial rule by the Meles Zenawi regime, that has made ethnic discrimination and division its political line, the task of assuring a democratic alternative has become even more onerous and complicated. The demagogic minority regime has made dividing the Ethiopian people along ethnic, and religious, line the fulcrum of its politics and ideology while imposing a virtual one party system under the guise of multi-partyism. Its economic policies have led to bankruptcy, 50% inflation, starvation of millions, and persistent dependence on food and budget aid, wide spread poverty and high unemployment rate. The ruling front lost the May 2005 elections but clung to power by repressing the people (more than 200 were massacred in Addis Ababa alone and some 50,000 rounded up and sent to prison



Is there still any possibility for the ruling front to be included in any option for a transition? As the situation stands there is little or no possibility to envisage the regime as a partner in any transition and thus its removal, as is, is a necessity. In other words, the opposition organizations must struggle to assure the removal of this regime and to replace it by a democratic one. That this may necessitate the adoption of all forms of struggle is a choice imposed by the intransigent regime and it should be undertaken in earnest to assure the interest of the Ethiopian people. Given the national interest of foreign powers, it is clear that the Ethiopian people will have to rely on themselves to assure their own future in all aspects.

The democratic alternative can be a reality on a new foundation for a democratic Ethiopia as we tried to express in our treatment of our conception of democracy.

- all political forces must be included in the transition process;
- the full respect of human rights, the rule of law and social democracy must be the foundation for the

## THE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN ETHIOPIA

### 1. WHAT DEMOCRACY?

As we wrote back in December 1989, we do not need to go back to Aristotle and Plato to define and redefine democracy. Let us state from the outset that we do not also accept the ethnic or racial definition of democracy or the contention that for Africans/ Ethiopians democracy can only have a limited scope. Given the fact that almost all forces, including the despots that wreaked and are still bringing havoc to Ethiopia, define their rule as democratic, it be hooves on us to present briefly what EPRP means by democracy.

As a social democratic party, the EPRP believes that democracy should embody political ideals and essence. It cannot and should not be reduced to a modality of electing leaders; it cannot be equated with simple elections however free these may be. The fact that every four or six years people come out to go to the ballots does not make that society democratic. The political essence of democracy is important. The people must directly participate in the



as we consider the problems of a democratic transition in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, at present, more and more forces are resorting to armed struggle. There are still ethnic organizations calling for secession at all costs. Multi ethnic political parties are neither armed nor strong because of the savage repression they had been subjected to by the TPLF. The EPRP and other organizations are still deemed illegal. Legal but patriotic organizations are hounded and harassed by the regime. The space for legal, political and peaceful struggle has been restricted by the TPLF itself. What then is the prospect for a democratic transition?

#### 4. What is the Way Out?

There are many pitfalls for those who dare to see the future, to define it and go after it. Ethiopian political organizations of all hues and ideologies have presented their programs and "visions" though foreign circles often

but in Ethiopia, where the very basic human and democratic rights have been denied for ages, it is imperative that we put much emphasis on the respect of rights, the role of the civil society, and the respect of the rule of law. What have been put on paper as rights have hardly ever been respected and thus it would not be entertaining a luxury if we insist on the guaranteeing of full rights. The right to free speech, freedom of the press, the right to dissent, to organize parties and associations and to be members of these, to peacefully demonstrate and strike, to peacefully move from one place/region to another inside the country and to travel abroad, to freely elect and be elected, to live under a rule of law with equal rights, to not be subjected to ethnic, gender and racial discriminations, the right to recall or impeach their elected leaders, etc.... must be guaranteed and respected. The role of the civil society must not be negated or denied by the totalitarian dissolution of civic associations or their cloning by State controlled bodies.

We can generally define democracy as a form of government (by and for the people), with the political and the social integrated. For us, it rests on a form that assures



and forced to flee. The independent press has been muzzled and a harsher Press Law has now been legislated while a repressive law that is aimed at ending any activity in support of human rights (the so called Charities and Societies Law) is about to be proclaimed. Thousands of political prisoners languish in known and underground prisons while torture has become routine. The army, the police, the bureaucracy are all dominated by one ethnic group. The Stalinist TPLF has stayed loyal to its basic dictatorial political choice while playing the free market and pluralism game as a joke to dupe or please Western powers that need its services in the so called war against terrorism in the Horn. In May 2005, the ruling Front lost a general election but stayed in power by unleashing violence against the Opposition forces and the people at large. It suffered little or no sanction from those who bankroll it or pay two thirds of its annual budget. The path of peaceful political struggle/competition is more or less closed as the ruling clique does not want to respect the voice and decision of the people and relies on its might to perpetuate itself in power. The recent election proved once again that the TPLF will continue to rig elections to continue the charade.

positions. The one party system proved dictatorial and did not achieve the unity desired or the economic progress that was sought. In Ethiopia, political parties were banned (Haile Sellasie's time), the one party system imposed (Mengistu's rule) and presently (under the Tigrean front TPLF) a one party system in reality that conveniently calls itself otherwise by surrounding itself with satellite groups and organizations. Parties do not divide the people but they express the existing diverse interests. An all encompassing Movement or all dominating one party is a recipe for dictatorship and disaster. Though the existence of many parties in a country is not an automatic indication of the existence of broad democracy the imposition of a one party system and the denial of the right to be organized in different political parties is a sign of dictatorship. Democratic rights are universal whatever the specific forms of government may be. The basic rights cannot be restricted on the basis of race or culture and thus the assertion that African countries, given the low level of economic development or lack of long democratic culture, cannot be expected to have the same rights as peoples in the developed countries is very wrong. Hence, the objection to multi-partism in Africa by arguing that



human rights and democratic governance while it has established an ethnic based dictatorship.

### 3. THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The problems are legion, the possibility of a democratic alternative murky. Here is how out it back in 1989 before the present front came to power:

"The democratic alternative in Ethiopia is not a given, it is not a foregone conclusion however much our people desire it. There is the totalitarian junta, whose lust for power is destroying the country piecemeal. There are also armed movements who, deluded by military strength and afflicted by lack of political foresight, are posing a serious problem to such an alternative by forwarding another version of the same totalitarian disaster. Will these, mainly and exclusively the TPLF at present, see the errors of their positions and correct their line? A big doubt lingers." (emphasis added here)

Terror and the insurgency wars). In May-June 2005, Ethiopians in their millions gave their votes to opposition parties and ousted the dictatorial regime of Meles Zenawi that clung to power using ruthless repression and foreign backing. All over Africa, the people have shown their strong desire to have their full rights and have paid in blood to achieve their objectives. Even where apathy may exist that has never meant acquiescence. Moreover, it would be wrong to compare degrees of repression and to conclude people are better off "now than then" because the regime in place is not killing as many per day as the former used to (a curious argument forwarded to defend the Meles regime not on its merits by comparing its dictatorship to the past military one). The stability thus alluded to is illusory for the people concerned, the peace jut a facade, the repression and denial of rights persistent and ruthless.

For the EPRP, democracy embodies pluralism precisely because this is one way in which the people can play a direct role in political life. By organizing themselves over and above the civil society associations in political parties, by choosing among parties, by passing through the process



in a democratic way by majority vote. It is not the task of the provisional government to draft a Constitution.

However it should

- assure the release of all political prisoners;
- take concrete measures concerning the rules and technicalities of the election;
- ensure the means of disarming all armed groups and find ways of rearranging the whole military apparatus/structure prior to the election.

It is not the task of the provisional government to carry out referendums or take decisions affecting Ethiopia's territory or sovereignty.....Assuring the democratic rights of the people is a sine qua non or precondition for the success of the task of the provisional government."

The EPRP made it clear then that the military junta and the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF) posed the main obstacle to such an evolution. As feared, the Tigray front manoeuvred with Washington and London to undertake a transition conference that excluded genuine Ethiopian forces like the EPRP and the Meles Zenawi regime was established to impose its ethnic chauvinist dictatorship on

rights, the respect of the right to dissent, the peaceful resolution of differences and contradictions. In the absence of democracy and where dictatorship reigns, political differences lead to conflict and armed struggles and violence become the norm. It is important to emphasize that freedom or democracy have no content and substance if it is not respectful of the freedom to dissent. A country cannot be run on democratic centralism like a leftist clandestine political party. The tendency to repress differing stands, political positions and ideologies is therefore opposed to democracy. The demand for multipartism is also part of the insistence on the civil society to have its free space, to organize in autonomous associations without State control imposed upon them. The control of civil associations, trade unions, etc by the State is not democratic but totalitarian.

Self administration is another essential part of democracy. The people's participation in decision making is not only through taking part in free elections but in their capacity to administer themselves from the local to the national level. In Ethiopia, where several nationalities exist the diversity can be democratically handled and harnessed



Equality before the law. Self administration. Full respect for human rights. Social democracy is the democracy the EPRP considers appropriate and feasible for Ethiopia.

## 2. THE MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Ethiopia had the chance to secure a working transition towards democracy but these opportunities were shortcut by armed elements who wanted to impose their own dictatorships.

The February 1974 Revolution found the majority of Ethiopians rising against the feudal autocracy and clamouring for a democratic change. But the call for democracy and "people's power" was hijacked by armed military officers who carried out their own coup and set up a provisional military government that conveniently forgot the provisional part of its name. The EPRP and other popular forces called for the establishment of a provisional people's government to be made up of all political organizations and including civic society associations and groups. This was a good chance for a democratic transition that would have opened the path for

and self administration as an option within a democratic and non centralized system is a sure way of avoiding the two extremes of oppression and separation. Democracy includes self administration at all levels, from the lowest administrative entity to the national level. Self administration as part of decentralization and empowerment of the people is thus included in the democracy we envisage for the country. Local democratic formations will replace centralization and thus make devolution of power to the grassroots level a reality.

While individual rights are important and should be safeguarded, the democracy we envisage puts more emphasis on economic, social and political rights. That is to say: social democracy. Effective participation of the people in politics requires first of all their well being and capacity to do so. Hence, the right to education, adequate health care, to work, etc become crucial. The recognition and weight of collective rights would also have to be manifested practically, in parliament for instance, in political and economic participation. The federal structure proposed by the EPRP with the parliament having two chambers is a case in point. The respect of the rights of the